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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1351  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4056  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2028  
RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA 4254  
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA 0972  
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 0117  
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 2588  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 3612  
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 1079  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 000978

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/27/2017  
TAGS: PHSA PREL CH ID RP PO AS JA  
SUBJECT: EAP/MLS DIRECTOR SCOT MARCIEL,S FEBRUARY 27  
MEETINGS WITH MOFA

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Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Japan is still studying the question of how best to increase collaboration with the United States on assistance to Southeast Asia, MOFA First Country Assistance Planning Division Director Maeda told EAP/Office of Maritime Southeast Asia Director Marciel, on February 27. Establishing multilateral projects between Japan, the United States, and ASEAN would have a better chance of success, he suggested. MOFA Second Southeast Asia Division Director Isomata shared U.S. concerns about increased violence in East Timor and noted President Gusmao will visit Japan in March to attend a peace-building seminar. On the Philippines, Isomata explained that concerns about the extra-judicial killings might affect ODA provision. Encouraging Malaysia and Indonesia to sign the Regional Cooperation Agreement on the Prevention and Suppression of Piracy is one of PM Abe's foreign policy goals, Isomata explained, while adding Japan wants the U.S. to wait to join ReCAPP until after Malaysia and Indonesia join. In addition to stepping up cooperation with ASEAN, MOFA Asian Regional Policy Division Director Aikawa recommended the United States become more engaged with the East Asia Summit. End Summary.

Aid Cooperation in Southeast Asia

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¶2. (C) MOFA First Country Assistance Planning Division Director Toru Maeda told EAP/Office of Maritime Southeast Asia Director Scot Marciel, on February 27 that his government needed more time to ponder the question of how to increase collaboration with the USG on assistance in Southeast Asia. The United States and Japan have different "brand names" in the region, and since certain brand names are more effective in particular places, it is better to keep them separate than to try to merge the brand names, Maeda asserted. Marciel suggested that publicly identifying projects that complement each other, rather than being joint, would be an alternate way to highlight U.S. cooperation with Japan and ASEAN. Stepping up bilateral U.S.-Japan cooperation and multilateral U.S.-Japan-ASEAN cooperation would bring increased benefits for everyone, Marciel added.

¶3. (C) Maeda responded that moving forward on joint aid

projects would require high-level discussion within the Japanese government. There may be small projects where local communities would welcome joint U.S.-Japanese cooperation, but Japan would need more time to identify possible opportunities, Maeda noted. Taking a multilateral approach to aid projects in ASEAN countries is very beneficial, Maeda agreed. Building trust and confidence with the host country takes time; it is important for the host country to be in the driver's seat on aid projects, Maeda emphasized. In response to a question on whether collaboration with the United States could have a negative impact for Japan, Maeda explained that the host country should determine the depth of U.S.-Japanese cooperation.

East Timor

¶ 14. (C) Marciel told MOFA Southeast Asia Division Director Akio Isomata that the United States wants to continue to coordinate and cooperate with Japan, along with Portugal and Australia, in promoting stability, accountability, and free and fair elections in East Timor. Isomata agreed. He said Japan is concerned about increased violence in East Timor, and is committed to promoting nation-building there, but it will be years before concrete progress is made. It is difficult to know how much of the violence is politically motivated, Marciel stated, adding that the U.S. also is concerned about the lack of discipline in the military. President Gusmao is planning to visit Japan in March to attend a peace-building seminar sponsored by the Japan Institute of International Affairs, Isomata noted.

Indonesia

¶ 15. (C) Turning to Indonesia, Isomata stated that reducing corruption, establishing rule of law, creating a market

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economy, and improving human rights are all very important. Prime Minister Abe has very good personal ties with Jakarta and may visit Indonesia after the July Upper House election, he added. Marciel said the United States and Japan share an interest in encouraging economic liberalization and reform in Indonesia, and should work together as much as possible. Isomata agreed, and observed that U.S. officials could help speed up economic reform by visiting Indonesia more often. Japan and the United States need to share more information on Indonesia, and direct contact with the Japanese Embassy in Jakarta is an important step in doing this, Isomata stated.

Philippines

¶ 16. (C) Japan has adopted a cautious approach on aid projects in Mindanao due to security problems, and has guarded optimism on the peace process, according to Isomata. Japanese NGOs and Diet members are concerned about the unstable political situation and extra judicial executions, and this may influence Japanese ODA assistance to the Philippines, he explained. Prime Minister Abe strongly conveyed his concern to President Arroyo but is not planning to issue a statement on the political killings at this time, Isomata noted. Japan is working with Malaysia on ways to promote the peace process in Mindanao and Prime Minister Abe is going to raise this with the Malaysian deputy prime minister when he visits Tokyo in early March.

Combating Piracy

¶ 17. (C) Prime Minister Abe is encouraging Indonesia and Malaysia to sign the 2004 Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP). Japan believes that, if the international community can persuade either country to join, the other will follow. The United States will reinforce the importance of

joining, Marciel replied. Japan hopes Washington will respect the sensitivity of this issue, and hopes the United States will wait to join until after Malaysia and Indonesia join, Isomata stressed.

ASEAN and Regional Architecture

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¶8. (C) MOFA Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director Kazutoshi Aikawa told Marciel that ASEAN appears to becoming stronger and "more serious," and may be trying to counter the possible future rise of Chinese and Indian regional influence. Aikawa commented that ASEAN Plus Three was getting too large and unfocused. The East Asia Summit (EAS) should be used to achieve goals such as coping with avian flu, energy issues, disaster management, educational exchanges, and financial issues. The United States should be come more engaged on the EAS framework because ASEAN Plus Three is becoming increasingly influenced by China and "some countries" are uncomfortable with this, Aikawa explained. ASEAN's attitude on regional architecture development is improving because more countries are realizing the possible benefits, Aikawa said.

¶9. (U) EAP/Office of Maritime Southeast Asia Director Scot Marciel has cleared this cable.

SCHIEFFER